

## Random Encounters

# Ways of the Sword

By Robert Wiese



### Way of the Flashing Blade Academy

Deep in the heart of the city, one can find many schools to teach swordplay and fighting. Few, if any, are quite like the Way of the Flashing Blade Academy. From the outside it appears like any other such school or guild, but within the doors visitors and students find it far different.

The brainchild of the duelist Tendra Maralis, the Way of the Flashing Blade is more like a monastery than a swordplay school. When Maralis considered passing on her considerable skills, she reflected on her own education, and studied different schools and ways of learning. The unarmed expertise of monks attracted her attention, and she eventually modeled her school on the monastic approach.

Within the walls of the school the students are classed into four levels: novices, juniors, swordarms, and seniors. Above the students are the four masters who teach the arts of dueling, and the one spiritual master who prepares their minds and focuses their discipline. Students come to the Way of the Flashing Blade to learn dueling, and specifically the art of fighting with the rapier in honorable combat. The skills apply to other sorts of combat as well, but the focus of the studies is on discipline, honor, and then skill.

When a prospective student comes to the school, he is first tested for determination and for lawfulness. Only those who will obey the codes of the duelist can study here, and only those who will persevere despite setbacks are admitted. Once this testing is complete, the new student is put into the right level according to skill. The student fights other students, from the lowest to the highest, until he is beaten. Once beaten, the student is put at the level below the student who defeated him. If the new student beats the senior opponent, he fights one of the masters. The student is then either taken as a personal student to one of the masters (each has only one at a time) for a period of three years, or dismissed from the school if he defeats the master. After all, if one defeats a master, the school has nothing to offer.

The student spends as many years at the school as necessary to rise to senior. Students rise in grade by defeating three students at their own level and one at the next higher level. Seniors can leave the school after six months' additional training, or they can petition for personal training from a master if a master has a vacancy. Only the most dedicated and skilled are selected by the masters for personal training.

The Way of the Flashing Blade Academy has an ongoing conflict with the Cat's Claw Dueling Pride, another dueling school of sorts in the same city. The conflict began years ago over personality and style disagreements between the two schools' headmasters, and it has become more intense as the students have become involved. Incidents have led to reprisals, which have led to more reprisals. Now it is not uncommon to find students of each school dueling with each other, either in a friendly test of styles or in a hostile test of wills. Usually these duels disperse before law enforcement officials become involved, but sometimes not. In these cases, the students spend some time in jail before returning to their school.

Maralis and the masters at the Way of the Flashing Blade are very serious about discipline, both within oneself and within the society. Following the many rules of the school is done for practice and development of self-discipline, not because the masters are arbitrary and controlling of their students. One master is responsible for spiritual discipline and growth. This man, a monk named Havar Kerpin, teaches meditation, focus, awareness of the world around the student, and the value of life. "The student of the Way kills only when necessary," he often says in lessons.

To assist in their dueling, and to resist the magic of their rivals, Maralis has a wizard on her staff whose job is to prepare new spells to help her students and prepare potions of these spells for those who cannot cast arcane spells. The potions are sold to students and former students only, unless there is some grave disaster that can be averted by the use of her school's potions. The most recent spell is one to help concentration.

#### Steely Focus

Transmutation

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 2

**Components:** V, S

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** Touch

**Target:** One creature touched

**Duration:** 1 hour/level

**Saving Throw:** Will negates (harmless)

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

*Steely focus* allows its target to resist magical distractions more easily. In place of a Will saving throw to resist the effects of a distracting spell (one that causes the target to lose actions) such as *Tasha's hideous laughter* or *daze*, the target of this spell can substitute a Concentration check. Further, the spell grants a +4 bonus on Concentration checks, and this bonus stacks with all other bonuses. Against mundane distractions requiring a Concentration check, this spell grants only the +4 bonus.

### **Bring the Parts Together**

Although random encounters usually happen by chance, some DMs may wish to tie these four parts together into something that could lead to further adventures. The school may be a place where your player characters can study dueling, if they are so inclined. More likely, the PCs would get involved in a conflict between this school and the Cat's Claw Dueling Pride. They could help one side or the other, or seek the truth of a conflict's origin for some third party to avert a dueling war in the city.

#### **Coming in Part 2 of Ways of the Sword**

Take a look at the arcane duelist prestige class!

---

[Return to Main Page](#)

---